

Early this year I formed a new bipartisan Upstate New York Congressional Caucus which was joined by all of my colleagues representing upstate districts. Our purpose is to collectively work to advance the unique issues we face in Upstate New York, namely to create good jobs and strengthen the regional economy.

Our first project is the "third track initiative", the construction of a third, high-speed track along existing rail lines between Buffalo and Albany with stops in Rochester, Syracuse and Utica. Eventually, we'd like to see this track link the Northeast Corridor, the Midwest, and major Canadian cities.

I do not have to tell you that those of us who live in Upstate New York do not have good transportation options to travel. Air travel can be prohibitively expensive. Our current rail options are slow and unreliable and with the price of gasoline constantly in flux, driving is not always optimal either.

The addition of a high-speed rail line reaching speeds of 110mph will increase train frequency and reduce travel time which would certainly create new ridership markets to the benefit of upstate businesses, universities, and tourist destinations. It is estimated that the project would create 12,000 construction jobs and increase the state's economic output by almost \$2 billion, just what we need to rev the engines of our economy.

It is expected that the "third track initiative" can be completed within three to five years at a cost of \$3 billion to \$5 billion.

I am leading the Upstate New York Caucus in the effort to secure this funding and bring the project to fruition. We are working with key players at the national, state, and local levels to ensure that this endeavor moves forward quickly and with a strong base of support. It is heartening that President Obama recently named the "third track initiative" as a contender for a portion of the \$8 billion designated for high-speed rail in the economic recovery package.

The construction of a high-speed rail line will bring with it job creation and boosted economic activity, just what we need to sustain our region for the future. Full steam ahead.